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COUNSELOR CONNECTION

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HIGH SCHOOL

AlabamaMentor Website Set for Spring Launch Date

By Thomas G. Dismukes Jr.
Alabama Student Loan Program-KHEAA

KHEAA, in cooperation with Xap Corporation, is designing the AlabamaMentor website to help students explore higher education opportunities available in Alabama. We anticipate a spring launch date.

AlabamaMentor is being funded in large part by KHEAA so the website can be provided at no cost to students and schools. As a result, students will be able to access a one-stop shop to search for Alabama colleges that match their interests and needs, explore careers, prepare academically and financially, and apply online for admissions and financial aid. Alabama colleges and universities can benefit from increased outreach opportunities and the online admissions application. And, because KHEAA is providing much of the funding, colleges can save on their recruiting and admissions costs.

More than 30 similar sites are in use around the country.

"I have been using [Mentor] since it first came out and find it a 'no brainer' for students, parents and counselors to use," said Judy Campbell, a counselor at Hollywood High School in California. "It's well designed; the layout is attractive, logical and easy to use."

"It has a wonderful planning component that enables students to start planning early by listing the courses they have taken and grades they have received and getting feedback about what else they need to complete."

Campbell said the California site, www.csumentor.edu, works well even if students don't plan ahead, since they can enter

their grades, classes and other personal information and hit the "send" button.

"I hope the whole country jumps on this bandwagon and makes it as easy for their students to apply to college as our kids in California can," she added.

This past year Mentor systems saw over 14 million users create 1.1 million accounts and submit 540,000 admissions applications online, and the numbers continue to grow.



KHEAA is providing this website as a service to the people and schools of Alabama. We know the hopes, dreams and ambitions of people are the greatest natural resource the state possesses. KHEAA is excited to provide this tool to help make those dreams come true.

We want AlabamaMentor to create a single, simple, friendly and interactive website to promote and serve Alabama higher education.

Benefits for students include:

- Understanding educational opportunities in Alabama.
- Planning to meet all admissions requirements.
- Secure, private, multiuse portfolio.
- Exploring and selecting the campuses best matching their needs and interest.
- Online admissions and financial aid applications.
- Understanding financial aid.
- Educational and career planning.
- Direct communication among students, campuses and financial aid providers.

Counselors and teachers will find:

- Accurate information on college entrance requirements.
- Key contacts and facts, with access to a student's planning if the student grants approval.



- Expansion to include online letters of recommendation and electronic signatures to authenticate counselors' and teachers' identities.

Among the many benefits for colleges and universities are:

- Links so students can visit a school's website to plan, search and apply for admissions.
- A faster, more efficient, cost-saving method to process admissions applications.
- Direct communication with students.
- Customizing campus tour with digital images, and update their tour data in real-time.
- A direct path to their individual AlabamaMentor application from their own website.

While maintaining an individual identity for each school, the site also offers a global presence for the college and universities of Alabama.

Take the time to view an operating Mentor web page and see how it works. Two sites to check out are CNFC.org and KentuckyMentor.org.

Financial Aid Special Project Has Good Results

By Thomas G. Dismukes Jr.
Alabama Student Loan Program-KHEAA

One of the main goals of the Alabama Student Loan Program-KHEAA (ASLP) and the Alabama Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA) recently has been to help high school counselors get financial aid information to prospective college students in a timely manner. This lets students increase their financial aid and college options. To accomplish this, we asked volunteers from ASLP and AASFAA to do financial aid presentations throughout Alabama.

These volunteers identified schools in the counties they work and live in and set up financial aid presentations between September and February.



They made 130 financial aid presentations in 49 of the 67 Alabama counties, reaching over 8,030 students, parents and counselors with financial aid information.

Our short-term goal was to complete at least one financial aid presentation in every county in Alabama before the end of February. We didn't quite make it, but we're well on our way of achieving our long-term goal: To make a difference in the lives of the majority of all students in Alabama who wish to attend college.

This is the first year we have had this kind of collaborative effort to promote financial aid throughout the state. We hope to make next year bigger and better. Please contact me at tdismukes@kheaa.com or 800.721.9720 if you have any questions or suggestions about this special project.

ASLP Employee Visiting High Schools in Alabama

By Thomas G. Dismukes Jr.
Alabama Student Loan Program-KHEAA

Since October, ASLP employee Jeff Golden has been visiting high schools in central and south Alabama to bring a face to the principals and counselors of these schools. Jeff has already completed more than 80 school visits and will be moving north as he continues his trek through Alabama.

ASLP has had a tradition of providing publications, including *Getting In*, flyers and brochures, to help schools and students with information about preparing for college.

Jeff brings experience and enthusiasm as he ventures forth throughout Alabama meeting the unsung heroes of our educational system.

At present only one *Counselor Connection* is being sent to each school. If you need more, please let us know so we can make sure that you get as many newsletters as you have counselors. Thanks.